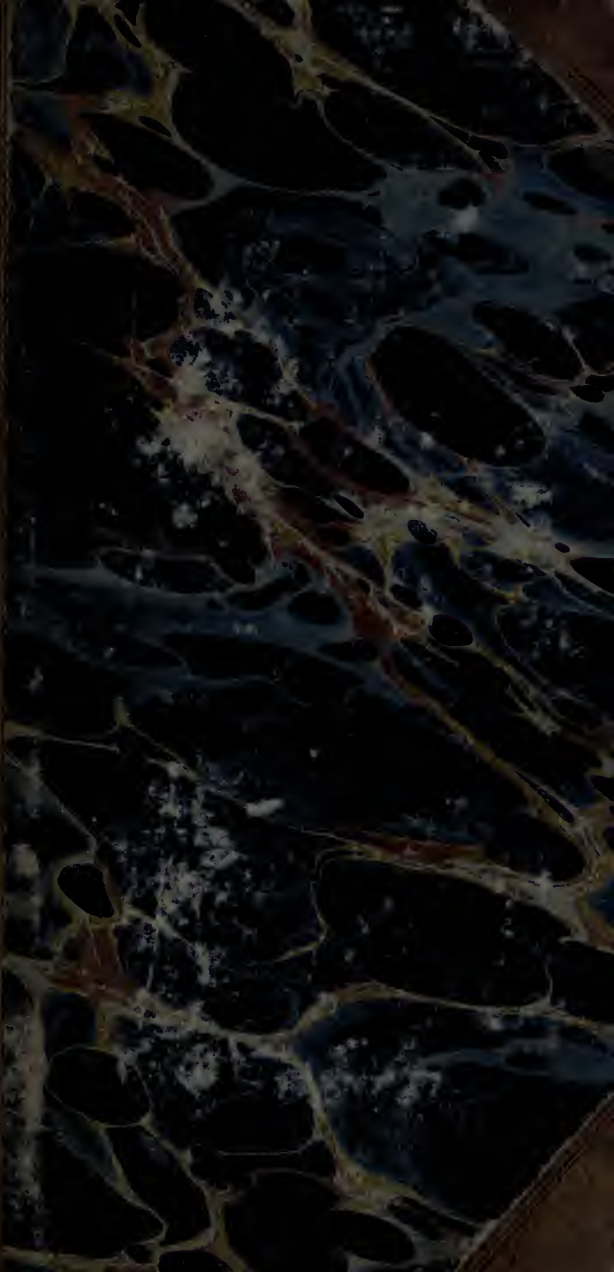


THE

PASTOR'S ADDRESS

TO

HIS FLOCK,

AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE YEAR

1836.

SUDBURY:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY G. W. FULCHER.

THE

PASTOR'S ADDRESS.

Beloved Christian Friends,

In the post which I have so long been permitted to fill, as a watcher for your souls, I should sin against you and against the Lord, who still holds my soul in life, could I ever cease to be concerned about your spiritual welfare, to pray for you, or to shew you the good and right way.

If it be safe for you that I should repeat even the same things, to me this shall not be grievous. Some need to be taught what they have never known; the best-instructed often need to be reminded of what they once knew, but have either forgotten or failed to reduce to practice: and as fellow-servants of the same Master and fellow-heirs of the same grace of life, Christians universally must love as brethern, pray one for another, and be fellow-helpers to the truth.

I cannot suffer the season of good wishes to pass, without putting into your hands, a customary and permanent expression of mine for you.

May peace, even that which Jesus bequeathed and gave to his disciples, be within your walls and in your bosoms: May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which makes the

possessor rich indeed, be upon your habitations, your households, your work, and all you set your hands unto: May grace be to each and to all of you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins!

The Ministry which I have received in the Lord binds me to take heed unto myself, and unto the doctrine, that I may both save myself and you: and compared with salvation, this world's weal, or woe; its prosperity, or adversity; its health, or sickness; its ease, or smart is of small account. Happy is the heir of the Kingdom promised to them that love God, though lodged, like Joseph, in a prison; or cast, like Daniel, into a lions' den: and miserable, though clothed in purple, like Dives, and faring sumptuously every day, is he who has not that hope. Faith alone is competent to make a just estimate of the life that now is, and its joys, or sorrows. While sense is beguiled to pursue shadows, faith penetrates into futurity that it may grasp the glorious substance. Faith takes the range of the invisible world; expatiates in things unseen; scales the heavens and, assimilating itself to its sublime Object the high and lofty One, inhabits eternity.

To walk by faith, not by sight, is the discriminating mark of the true believer. For things not seen and eternal *he* despises those things which are seen and temporal, sustains the character of a pilgrim and a stranger, renounces the world, according to his baptismal promise, and professes to be in quest of an inheritance, and a home in heaven. May we all be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus! Some, I trust many, are indeed such: others doubtless are in a state to call for our fervent prayer that the like precious faith may be given to them also; and this, before eternity shall disclose in all its terrors what will be the appointed portion of those who have not obtained it.

Have I this faith, am I a child of God by faith? These are inquiries of real weight and interest. We know that man's natural heart is an evil heart of unbelief, and that true faith is found in none but the

regenerate, who are consequently declared to be born of God, and born of the Spirit: and again, Am I a partaker of, have I experienced the regenerating change, of which baptism is the sign, and was also intended to be the seal? He who has never anxiously, nor in earnest put the inquiry may conclude that in him the indispensable change is still wanting. "He has no hope, who never had a fear," and he who never doubted, has reason to suspect both the reality and the existence of his faith.

The mind of the truest Christian may occasionally be perplexed: "I could be satisfied," he may be ready to say, "if I certainly knew, that I had faith, were a child of God indeed, and in the narrow and right way for heaven." Such an inquirer should be met by his minister with fidelity and tenderness, and were he to suggest the ground of his perplexity to me, I would propose, for his conviction or satisfaction, the following considerations.

1. Have your eyes been opened to see clearly the wretchedness and misery of your natural state as "born in sin" and for sin "exposed and liable to the wrath of God?" Have you discovered that sin is the secret source of all unhappiness, and yet that by nature you are inclined to, and a lover of sin? In self-will have you seen a tyrant worse than the severest of Pharaoh's task-masters; and in your "own way," the way to everlasting ruin? Do you perceive yourself to be condemned in every particular by the law of God, and yet esteem all its precepts concerning all things to be right? Is self-exaltation exchanged for self-humiliation? Do you conceive of yourself as "dust and ashes" like Abraham; as vile, like Job; as sinful, like Peter: as nothing, or the chief of sinners like Paul? It is most certain that such thoughts all the true children of God have had, and have now of sin, and of themselves;—and supposing such to be your thoughts ask again—

2. Are you looking unto Jesus? Has a sense of guilt and misery drawn and engaged your heart to him? Are your eyes toward him, as those of the snake-stung

Israelite toward the brazen serpent? Is he to you, what the pole-star is to the mariner, as he steers across a trackless deep: what light is to the benighted, who watch for the morning: what bread is to the hungry, or drink to the thirsty? In the eyes of the unbelieving he has neither form nor comeliness: do you see *that* in him which constrains you to bear witness, "how great is his beauty; he is fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into his lips." It is most certain that faith, and only faith is qualified to make this estimate of the Saviour; to those only who believe is he thus precious; but with these feelings toward Christ ask once more—

3. Is holiness the object of your incessant pursuit? That holiness which involves a separation from sin, and conformity in heart and life to the example of Christ and his Father's will; and without which no man shall see the Lord? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is sin your aversion and dread; the foe, with which you wage an implacable war; and which you are resolved shall not only be conquered, but die? And since sin can only be subdued by the power of the Spirit of holiness, is it your prayer that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow, and your daily endeavour, through the Spirit, to mortify sin? Is the resistance of the flesh your grief, and the perverseness of the will your burden? Are you familiar with the work of heart-keeping, and heart-watching: and diligent in the exercise of self-control, and self-trial? It is most certain that such exercises and such dispositions are the accompaniments and effects of a true faith; and will warrant your rejoicing in hope of the glory of God: a rejoicing, of which neither the infirmity of your faith, nor the consciousness of your weakness shall rob you, though they may be permitted to chastise it with a measure of self-distrust, or temper it with a mixture of salutary fear.

Way-marks like these have the double use of establishing a true, and unsettling a false hope: of certifying the child of God that he has faith, and detecting the

professor's want of it. It is vain to expect that any one will be converted from the error of his way without being first convinced that *his'* is a way of error; nor can *he* be savingly convinced of sin, whose own conscience has not first been instructed to tell him, that for sin he is worthy everlastingly to perish: then only with becoming anxiety and earnestness will he ask "what must I do to be saved?" Or be prepared in his heart of hearts to appreciate and welcome the answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Let our ceaseless petition be "Lord, give faith to the unbelieving, and where Thou hast given it, let faith grow exceedingly, that it may purify the heart, conquer the world, and work by love."

The times we live in are by many supposed to be the predicted perilous times of the last age of the world: undoubtedly the signs of our times correspond with those which the prophetic word declares will precede the second coming of our Lord. By these signs, He who rules the world shews us the instability of all authorities but *His'*. Things that before seemed to be stable are shaken, that faith's eye may be turned to things "that cannot be shaken;" and look out for "the immoveable Kingdom." and the heart of the believer may be encouraged by the assurance,

1. That the Lord is King for ever and ever; that his wisdom foresees and his power directs all events to their right conclusion; and consequently, that nothing can happen out of the order of his providence or contrary to his purpose, or adverse to his counsel: and

2. That the supreme object of his heart's desire and prayer must ultimately and infallibly be secured: his Father's name will be hallowed: his Father's kingdom will come; and his Father's will must be done.

It is said of Luther, who lived in "troublous times" like our's, that in the 46th Psalm, he discovered never-failing materials to sustain his faith and encourage his hope: but what portion of the divine word is not rich in such materials? There, in conjunction with the SIGNS,

let us look for the DUTIES of the times, and may the *last* be as open in our practice to the observation of others, as the *first* in the awful revelation of them to our own. The Church of God like the ark may be tossed on the billows, but shall surely arrive at the desired and destined port; only in the mean time let the believer who is a "very member incorporate" in that Church abound in his Lord's work, have his loins girt, and his lamp burning, and watch and pray always that he may be counted worthy to escape the things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Such, beloved Christian Friends, are my desires for you, and for myself: and that God may give us understanding to discern the signs, and grace to discharge the duties of the times is and shall be the prayer of

Your faithful and affectionate

PASTOR.

P. S. I subjoin a few prayers arranged, (except the last,) according to the days of the week, and which, if added to our family or private devotions may form betwixt us another daily bond of christian sympathy and union.

SUNDAY.

1. *For the Ministers of God's word.*

Give thy grace, O Lord, and heavenly benediction to those whom thou hast called to serve in the ministry of thy Church, that both by their life and doctrine, they may set forth thy true and lively word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments: Let thy word spoken by their mouths have such success that it may never be spoken in vain, but be effectual through thy constant blessing, and Holy Spirit to set forward their own and our salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

2. *For those of their charge.*

Lord, grant to us and all thy people grace to hear and receive what shall be delivered unto us out of thy holy word, or agreeable to the same, as the means of our salvation; and, that we may be doers of the word and not hearers only, let thy Holy Spirit in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MONDAY.

For a right use of the word of God at home.

Sow, we beseech thee, heavenly Lord, the seed of eternal life in our hearts: Let thy word be our daily delight and study, the lamp to our feet and the light to our path, that obeying thy will and alway being in safety under thy protection, we may abide in thy love unto our lives end, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

TUESDAY.

For increase of grace.

Increase in us, O Lord, more and more a lively faith and love, fruitful in all holy obedience: and continue thy favor with the light of thy Gospel to us and our children after us, for thy dear Son's sake. Amen.

WEDNESDAY.

For perseverance.

O Almighty Lord, and everlasting God, teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Grant that no conceit of any thing good in us, may withdraw our eyes from looking upon ourselves as sinful dust and ashes; but that we may press forward to the prize of our high calling, in faith and patience, humility and meekness, mortification and self-denial, charity and constant perseverance unto the end. Grant it, Lord, for Jesus' sake, to whom with Thee, and the Holy Ghost be honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

THURSDAY.

For Unity.

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ our only Saviour, the Prince of peace; Take away all hatred and prejudice and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord, that as there is but one body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart and one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may, with one mind and one mouth, glorify Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FRIDAY.

1. *For the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.*

O Almighty Lord, who art a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Thee, to whom all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey; be now and evermore our defence, and make us know and feel, that there is none other Name under heaven given to man, in whom and through whom, we may receive health and salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. *For salvation and help by the Cross of Christ.*

O Saviour of the world, who by thy cross and precious blood hast redeemed us, save us, and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord. Amen.

SATURDAY.

Under or in the prospect of trials of any kind.

1. O Glorious and gracious Lord God, we thy creatures, but miserable sinners, cry daily unto Thee for help: we confess, when we have been safe and seen all things quiet about us, we have forgotten Thee, our Lord, and refused to hearken to the still small voice of thy word: yet let none of our past sins cry against us for vengeance, but, O Lord, hear us begging mercy and imploring Thee to stir up thy strength, and come and help us, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

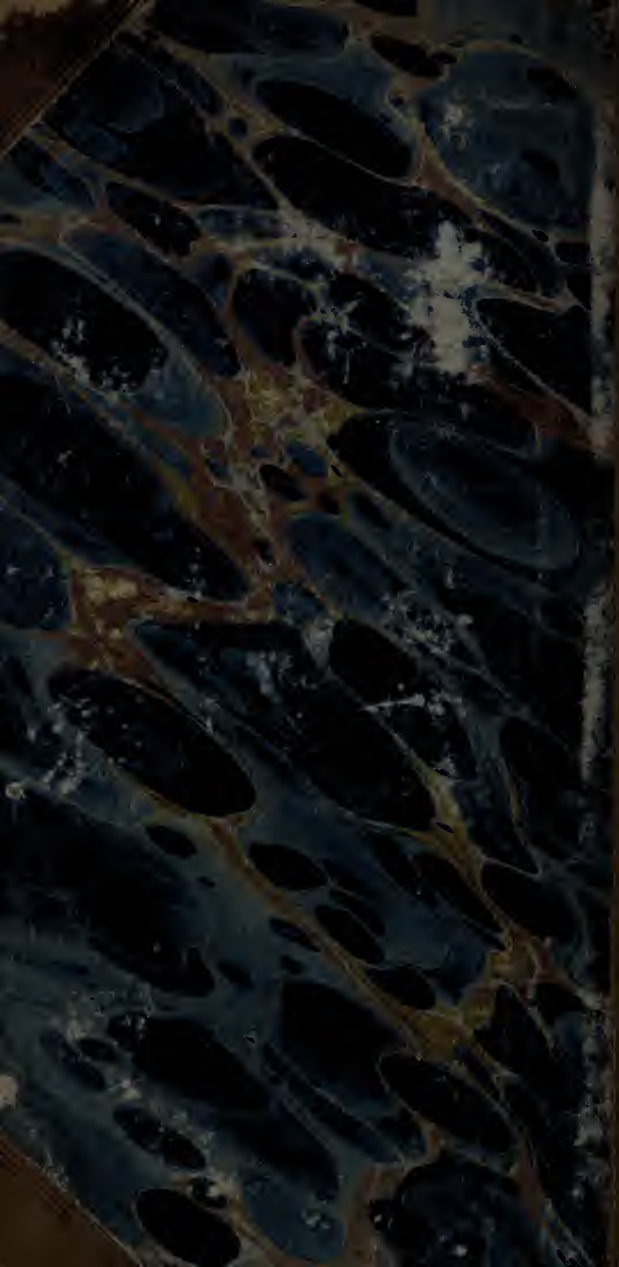
2. Lord, be merciful to us sinners, and save us for thy mercy's sake. Thou art the great God that hast made and rulest all things. O suffer us not to sink under the weight of our sins, nor the violence of the tempter. O Lord, arise, help us, and deliver us, for thy name's sake. Amen.

3. Thou, O Lord, who stillest the raging of the sea, hear, hear us, and save us that we perish not.

O blessed Saviour, who didst save thy disciples ready to perish, hear us, and save us, that we perish not.

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, hear us, have mercy upon us, save us now and evermore. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE LABORING POOR.

O Lord God, who orderest all things, it is thy pleasure, that I should earn my bread by my labor: Lord, let thy pleasure be mine: only, I pray Thee, provide me with work for my hands, and give me both strength and grace to perform it with diligence and fidelity to my earthly master, and according to the will and example of my heavenly Lord and Master Jesus Christ: Keep me from adding to that honest labor which is the necessary duty of my calling, any of the unprofitable work of sin, which Thou hatest, and whose wages is everlasting death. Deliver me from a covetous and envious, a discontented and impatient spirit, that faith may never fail, nor hope, nor love, nor patience. And, if it should be thy pleasure to exercise me with even deeper poverty and sharper trials, let me neither distrust thy goodness, nor doubt thy power to help and deliver in the greatest strait, but rely on thy sure word, that Thou wilt never leave, nor ever forsake those that seek and serve, and put their whole trust, and confidence in thy mercy. If I suffer, grant that it may be as a Christian, not as an evil-doer: and if I am poor in this world, grant that I may be rich in faith, and an heir of the Kingdom which Thou hast promised to them that love Thee. As a sinner I know that I deserve worse than nothing, O let thy Holy Spirit work in me a constant repentance, and a stedfast faith; and a readiness always to resign my will to thine, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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